

The Common Soldier in the War with Mexico

Selected Activities

Discuss what factors motivated Americans to enlist.

Discuss the factors that motivated Mexican soldiers who fought in the war.

Describe the sights, sounds, and smells of a battle.

Describe what a voyage across the Gulf of Mexico was like.

Describe a march through a desert; a tropical forest; and a mountain range.

Discuss the reaction of Americans to new plants, food, insects, etc. they encountered in Mexico.

Compare and contrast the experiences of American and Mexican soldiers during the war.

Discuss the qualities that a company officer should possess.

Hold a mock election for captain. Have each candidate give a speech to the class telling why they would be the best choice for the office.

After the election, have the captain form his company and conduct the *Hand Drill*.

Find a recipe for 'hard tack' on the internet. Have students make 'hard tack' at home and bring it in to show the class. Award a prize for the best and most authentic example.

Compare and contrast punishment for military vs. civil crimes.

Have students use the internet to research how military surgeons would have treated gunshot wounds.

Discuss the factors existing in the early history of the United States that contributed to the independent nature of American volunteers.

Discuss how Mexican civilians reacted to the presence of American troops in their country.

Discuss how the presence of American troops sometimes bolstered the local economy.

Define the term camp followers. Discuss their role with the army.

Have the students use the internet to research the songs and music of the war.

Discuss the role of religion during the war.

Have the students write a letter home describing their experience as a common soldier.

Selected Resources

Best Books

Field, Ron. *Brassey's History of Uniforms: Mexican American War, 1846-48.*

Frazier, Donald S., ed. *The United States & Mexico at War: Nineteenth-Century Expansionism and Conflict.* [A one volume encyclopedia.]

Katcher, Phillip R. N. *The Mexican-American War, 1846-1848.*

McCaffrey, James M. *The Army of Manifest Destiny: The American Soldier in the Mexican War.*

Olivera, Ruth R., and Liliane Cr  t  . *Life in Mexico Under Santa Anna, 1822-1855.*

Winders, Richard Bruce. *Crisis in the Southwest: The United States, Mexico, and the Struggle over Texas.*

_____. *Mr. Polk's Army: The American Military Experience in the Mexican War.*

Participant Accounts

Chamberlain, Samuel. *My Confession: The Recollection of a Rouge.*

Smith, George Winston, and Charles Judah, eds. *Chronicles of the Gringos: The U.S. Army in Mexican War, Accounts of Eyewitnesses and Combatants.*

Periodicals

Ivey, Thomas R. "Soldiering, Suffering, and Dying in the Mexican War." *Journal of the West* 11 (April, 1972): 285-98.

May, Robert E. *Invisible Men: Blacks and the U.S. Army in the Mexican War.* See:
<http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/mex-war/Blacks-Mexican-War.pdf>

Winders, Richard Bruce, consulting ed. *Cobblestone: The U.S.-Mexican War, 1846-1848.*

Unpublished Thesis

Cashion, Peggy. "Women and the Mexican War." M.A. Thesis, University of Texas at Arlington, 1990.

Web Sources

<http://www.cobblestonepub.com/resources/cob0012t.html>

http://www.pbs.org/keramexicanwar/index_flash.html

<http://dmwv.org/>

<http://books.google.com/>